

RE: House Bills 5586 and 5812, and Senate Bill 231

February 5, 2015

My name is Crystal Dimanno and I live in Naugatuck. I have been a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) for 10.5 years and I am a member of District 1199/SEIU Healthcare.

I work at Village Green of Waterbury. I normally work 32 hours per week, but because of the staffing challenges that my nursing home faces regularly, I often work 60 hours per week or more.

The nursing home where I work is one of two nursing home facilities in the state of Connecticut that includes a unit for tracheostomy and ventilator dependent residents. As you can imagine, my residents require extensive care throughout the day.

But the difficulties that have resulted from underfunding compound the challenges that I face as a caregiver. Sometimes, we lack the basic supplies to do our jobs as CNAs. We always seem to lack enough staff to provide good care.

Although I started working as a CNA making \$11 an hour more than a decade ago, I still make less than \$15 an hour. This means that I'm being paid just a couple dollars more than the state minimum wage in order to provide high quality professional care to the people in our society who need it most. These nursing home residents are my family; they don't deserve a lack of supplies, low staffing, or a workforce of caregivers who are underpaid and overworked.

I entered the health care field because I wanted to help those in need. And I love my job and the residents I take care of. But if we truly want to aid the elderly, the ill, and the injured, I think it is imperative that we assess our priorities as a community and choose to increase funding for our nursing homes. It's the right thing to do, because increasing funding will generate benefits for thousands of nursing home residents and caregivers across the state of Connecticut.

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